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INR WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS
OF DEVELOPMENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS

No. 43, February 9, 1978

AMERICAN REPUBLICS

Argentina

List of 700 Detainees Released. The government released on February 3 a list of slightly over 700 state-of-siege detainees (about 675 of whom are women). All are being held in Devoto prison, a woman's facility in Buenos Aires.

Embassy Buenos Aires reports that a government statement accompanying the list emphasized that it was a presidential initiative taken pursuant to President Videla's Christmas promise to publish the names of some 3,600 executive prisoners. The newspaper, La Opinion, attributed the list and the recent activation of the right of option process (allowing state-of-siege prisoners to petition for exile) to a presidential strategy allegedly adopted after Videla's meeting with President Carter in September 1977.

While recognizing that the Devoto list was probably the easiest to get out because Devoto houses few if any dangerous suspects, Embassy Buenos Aires terms the list "a significant move" forward. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE, Buenos Aires 0903, February 4.)

INR Comment: The Embassy speculates that the heavy play given to Videla's personal role in publishing the list may have been an attempt to undercut fellow junta member and Navy Commander Massera's efforts to portray himself as the only government figure concerned with human rights abuses. Earlier reporting indicated that Videla decided to divulge the prisoner lists after becoming disgusted with the December kidnappings of individuals connected with the "Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo." (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

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